PAM.
AFRICA

MISSION WORK
AT
IKWEZI LAMACI.

GILBERT GILKES.

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1905.

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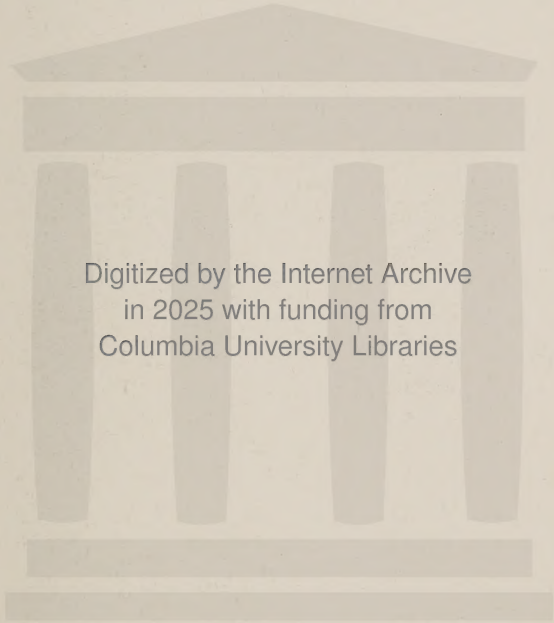
PAM.
AFRICA—
South
South Africa



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THE MISSION HOUSE, 1905.

THIS year Mr. and Mrs. Aitchison are not sending home any letters in report form for publication. The balance sheets and lists of subscribers are prepared by them as usual, but I am to have the pleasure of telling their subscribers and friends of the progress and character of their work this year, and I am glad of the opportunity.

I have much information from them, and have twice visited them at Ikwezi, and have spent some weeks under their roof; I have a fairly good knowledge of what is going on, and of the people amongst whom they are spending their lives.

To prepare a preface and to edit their long interesting letters as I have done, year by year, for very many years, is one thing, but to write an account of what I know, is a different matter altogether. In the first place the

report is recognised as giving in great measure *their* view of the Mission, and as they write they are conscious that they are writing about themselves, whereas, in the second place, *I* can write as one would in telling about the work of others: in short I can speak out and tell those who with me are interested in supporting the Mission, how thankful I am in being able to help, and how I can never cease to be thankful that I have been associated with Missionaries possessing such love to the heathen, and such ability, perseverance, and tact; but my wife and I found, when staying at Ikwezi, that personal congratulations were unwelcome; they would rejoice with us in the evidence that God's blessing was upon the work, but they did not make it easy for us to tell them how we felt they had been used of Him. We readily agreed that all was due to the power of God; but He works through His servants, and in giving a true account of what is done one has to speak of them in a way which they would never speak of themselves. It is without doubt that it is their constant service that has made their work rich in fruit bearing, it is because the love of Christ is in them, and they have yielded their lives in obedience to His command to preach to the heathen.

NATIVE EVANGELIST'S CHILDREN.

HERD BOYS.

Once when travelling in the district with Mr. Aitchison and my wife, I was in front of the carriage walking up a long hill with a Kaffir boy, who was with us to care for the horses. I had no idea that the boy knew any English, but it turned out that he was one of the few who were living at the Mission Station, and he had learnt some Scripture texts in English. He had not said a word to me, although we had walked up many hills together. I was pondering as we neared the Mission Compound on all that had been done, and I was, in a sense, discouraged when I thought of the large area yet untouched; there seemed no key to the situation, it was beyond human management. I spoke no word, but just then the boy came close to me and looked up with a smile and said, "Because I live ye shall live also." There was the key explaining the past and inspiring confidence for the future; it reached me by an unexpected messenger. It is a proof of wonderful love that Christ is in the Work, but once accept the fact and we see that its development is a natural sequence. It is in the light of this Presence that our friends live and labour.

Twenty-eight years have past since, at a meeting of the

Y.M.C.A. at Birmingham, the Young Men's Foreign Missionary Society was founded. It has been said, but it is a mistake to say so, that this Society promised to support the Mission. The undertaking was to provide means for three years for a single Missionary. This was done, and ever since then a good contribution in cash and kind has been forthcoming, but the work grew largely. Mr. Aitchison soon took to himself the dear partner whose loving co-operation has indeed proved her to be the helpmeet he needed. The Young Men's Society felt that, as it could not completely maintain the Mission, it would not be right for them to try to govern its affairs, but that their place was to contribute what they could, and leave the Missionaries to interest others, and to arrange for the work as it developed according to their own judgment. So they have gone on without a Committee, and they have prospered.

The Mission lands and buildings, which are of considerable value, are freehold and are vested in trustees.

Everything else about the Mission Station is Mr. Aitchison's property, but all is used for the Mission, although not held in trust as is the case with the land and buildings.

For many years we always thought of Ikwezi in connection with our *two* friends, but now another has arrived on the scene, and we are becoming accustomed to the thought that Gershom, who I met first as a boy of fifteen, and later as a student, has grown to man's estate, and after filling for sometime a position under the Government in connection with Native Education, has given it up to follow in his father's steps.

I had long talks with Mr. Aitchison about his son's future ; one thought that was always uppermost in his father's mind was this : there should be no preparation for Missionary work that would in any way make Gershom feel honourably bound to become a Missionary, he was to be encouraged to succeed in some other calling, in the thought that if the "Mission Call" came he could decide for himself. He has not drifted into a Missionary career because he was his father's son, but to quote his own words, because he felt "There is no greater privilege than to have the daily opportunity of speaking to men about the love of Christ." We hope that in the fulness of this call he will work for years to come, for the people amongst whom he was born, and whose needs and character he understands in a way that would be im-

possible to anyone who had reached manhood before becoming acquainted with them.

Mr. Gershom Aitchison, as I must now call the boy friend of a few years ago, has grown up under circumstances peculiarly favourable to gaining a very intimate knowledge of the habits of the people and of the tone of thought amongst them. His father's long residence in their midst, his undeviating justice, his calm demeanour, and the many proofs he has given the people of the sincerity of his love for them, have given his son splendid chances, for he has been able to move about among them as he chose, simply as his father's son, and there are few men who are so competent as he to speak of the needs of the Natives, and of the possibilities that exist for influencing them for good.

I wish I could tell my friends in some effective way of the change that has taken place during the last 28 years. The Mission had just been commenced when Mr. Aitchison went to Ikwezi Lamaci, and there was little to see in the way of buildings.

In the immediate district there are vast areas of velt, undulating land, looking just as it must have looked for centuries. Scarcely a sign of habitation is visible

WITCH DOCTORS.

from a distance; the circles of huts that form the "kraals" in which the people live are comparatively low and small, and are scarcely noticed in the landscape. One may look over thousands of acres on which hundreds of human beings live, without an idea that there is anyone there. Where superstition rules it brings many evils in its train, there is no inducement to improve the land; trees, it is feared, might harbour evil things; cultivated land might be a reason for the owner being turned away from the district, so that someone else might have it. The witch doctors have such influence over the minds of the people that they have power to compel them to leave their huts and seek a home somewhere else, and their help is often sought by those who wish to harm their neighbours; and so the land remains desolate.

But let us approach Ikwezi. The post cart has left us at Harding, seven miles from our destination, and we have come along a rough road or track for some six and a-half miles and have reached the top of the last hill, and we look down upon Ikwezi Lamaci. Where is the desolation? Groves of eucalyptus trees and acres of wattle trees have just come into view; as we proceed

down the hill we shall find substantial buildings, a pretty avenue, church and school, workshop and stables, and girls' school and training home. The gardens are bright with flowers, and oranges and lemons are in more or less profusion. What an object lesson this is to the heathen. The white man has disregarded the superstitions, and defied the dreaded bogies and the invisible dogs and baboons that were believed in by the natives. The land is *converted*, it is turned from its desolation and made serviceable to man, and already, here and there in the neighbourhood, the natives take courage and build a square house instead of huts, and plant trees.

I want to write more about those who have not begun to travel on the path that leads upward, than of those on whom the influence of the Mission has told, so let us visit a kraal together ; it is a little way off, and there are ladies in our party for whom the walk would be too much. Four oxen draw a large box (an old packing case) on runners, an impromptu sledge, up to the garden gate, and in this we take our seats and presently are gliding smoothly over the long slippery grass ; it is all right up hill and on the level, but going down hill it becomes a sort of tobogganing experience. We overtake

A "SQUARE" HUT AND CHRISTIAN FAMILY.

our steeds, but the boys with the cattle know how to manage them, and we arrive safely at a small kraal. There are five huts, one is a storehouse ; the mother is giving out mealies to little black children. In three of the other huts live the different wives of the owner, who himself lives with the favourite wife in a large hut, the remaining one, which is larger than the rest. We enter, and according to Kaffir etiquette, we should sit down on our heels immediately to the right of the square opening through which we have crept. The hut is twenty feet diameter inside ; it has wicker walls daubed with clay with a low domed thatched roof, no chimney, no window: the floor is of trodden earth. After a moment or two our hosts have spoken to us and we are made welcome, and we begin to see as our eyes become accustomed to the darkness. There is no furniture : the people are blanket clad, for it is winter. An old woman within a very few days of her death lies on the floor, propped up against a pillar that supports the roof. She has no hope, and will pass away into the next world with a sense of fear that the machinations of her enemies in this life will persecute her in another life. Her friends will likely enough lay her body in some hole in the ground secretly,

so that no one shall know where it lies, and the malevolent shall have no chance of continuing their persecution by means of witchcraft; the people who stand round the dying woman are living in the lowest depths of heathenism.

Someone has said that if the natural inclinations and tendencies of the unregenerate human being are allowed full play, untrammelled by the laws of civilisation or religion, a state of lawless depravity will ensue that is indescribable. Withdraw all thought of God and our duty to our neighbour, which is after all but a part of our service to Him, and fearful wickedness is sure to reign triumphant. Some people, probably all, by the actual need for keeping in touch with others, avoid the *deepest* depths, some have higher instincts than others, but the people in whose service our friends have spent their lives are not of a high type, and their degradation is beyond description and of a character that it is impossible to write about. Their joys, if you can call them so, are associated with the vilest debauchery, and when they meet for pleasure in their huts, that which gives point to their proceedings is hideous in its uncontrolled evil. The faces of the people are, it seems to me, dark

TYPICAL HUTS.

A CONTRAST.

and hopeless—one might almost call them animal faces —although from time to time there is a great deal of drollery and keenness of wit apparent ; quite enough to show that there is a capacity to receive teaching. Let us compare those who have been brought under Christian influence in early life with members of their own families, who have been less happy in this respect. The work at Ikwezi has gone on long enough to test the value of Christian influence, and there are men and women of forty years of age and upwards who, as children, were brought under instruction, and you may see in them what the Grace of God can do in changing the very character of their lives and the appearance of their faces, and you can compare them with those who have resisted the efforts made to reach them, and who have lived from childhood in the same neighbourhood, born in the same families, and yet so different from their relations that you could hardly imagine they belong to the same race.

What has made the difference? How is it that there are so many to whom the purpose of their creation has become known, and who live in purity and gladness in this life, and in the hope of the life which is to come. God's hand has done it all, and to Him the praise is

due, but He has used means; the unruffled selfless lives lived in their midst have all along been a living illustration of the truths of the simple Gospel that has been preached. It is this Gospel which has by God's blessing wrought that which has changed not only the aspect of the land, but the hearts of hundreds of men and women and children.

What has, humanly speaking, made it possible that this work should have been done? We must answer, the prayerful interest of many, and the means they have provided.

Yet one more question. What will enable the remaining years of the lives of our friends to bear fruit over a wider area, establishing centres of aggressive work further afield? The answer is a simple one: additional means. The work is there, the opportunities are there, and the ripe experience of the Missionaries and the loving regard in which they are held are powerful factors for good.

Here let me quote the words of the Rev. D. Russell, whose work as an evangelist is well known in South Africa:—"Friends who desire to invest money in a work that bears in every part of it the impress of the Divine blessing, should open an account with the Rev. Samuel

A NATIVE WEDDING.

Aitchison ;" these terse remarks follow a few lines from Mr. Russell's pen, which I copy from "Good News :"—
"My space will not allow anything like a sufficient notice
"of the work at Ikwezi. When that story is written it
"will take rank with the best stories of faith and work
"during the last quarter of a century. . . . Their work
"has increased on every side, their name is a household
"word alike among white and black people. They have
"built substantial Churches for the Colonists, the Griquas
"and the Natives, and have a girdle of preaching places
"all round Harding. Their son has given himself to the
"work, having freely given up a lucrative position and
"splendid prospects of advancement in the Government
"service."

The work that Mr. Aitchison has in hand is in one sense many sided, although the purpose of his life is one, viz :—the conversion of the heathen and their advancement in spiritual life ; but it would be a great mistake to suppose that he was only a preacher among the Kaffirs. It is not by his words alone that he conveys the good tidings, but by a life lived amongst the people which in its helpfulness and influence speaks of the Master he serves. We find in Mr. Aitchison, a farmer eager in

watching the crops on the Mission property; the cultivation of mealies, potatoes, oats, cabbages, beans, all come under his personal care; he avails himself of the opportunities that offer for planting acacias (some of which are useful for bark and others for shelter) and eucalyptus trees. Apple trees, quince, orange, lemon, lime, and grape vine are all under cultivation together, with other sorts of fruit trees which have not yet had time to bear fruit. He has also the responsibility of horses, cattle and sheep. It is interesting to know that the land at Ikwezi upon which the principal Mission buildings stand is freehold forever, and that 1800 acres more are being acquired by annual payments, so that in a few years 2000 acres of land, much of it of considerable value for farming purposes, will have become the freehold property of the Mission. Mr. Aitchison has therefore a considerable estate to manage, and he endeavours as opportunities offer to get the natives to settle on the land and to work upon it, paying small rents which help to make up the yearly instalments. A fair number of acres are now in cultivation for Mission purposes, but the value of the land of the Mission must not be regarded by what can be made at the present moment by cultivating it, for

there are great possibilities of development as the country is opened up by roads and railways, and the thought of those who have helped and are still helping in the purchase of the land, is that in time to come there will be an income from the estate which will help the Missionaries to continue their work in accordance with the terms of the trust deed.

I have said that Mr. Aitchison's work was many sided, for he is not only the Missionary and Teacher, but also farmer and land agent on the Mission Estates, and a magistrate of influence in the district, much trusted by the Government in connection with the native affairs, and the general superintendent of a work that comprises outlaying stations, some of them many miles from Ikwezi.

It is needless to say that in all his work Mrs. Aitchison is his constant companion and adviser, although there are many expeditions to distant places which she cannot undertake.

Her own work is principally at Ikwezi, where she is the centre and moving spirit in meetings held for older and younger women, and in the Home in which young girls are received and taught. From time to time she has had young helpers in the house, and the advantage

of their training under her influence has been very marked.

Mrs. Aitchison has prayed long and earnestly for sufficient means to make it possible to bring up some girls without their coming under the baneful influence of the heathen homes in which they were born, and the wish of her heart has been in a measure granted, as there is now a good building and it has become possible, although this portion of the work is sadly hindered from want of means, to rescue some of these young people from the evils to which they would otherwise be exposed.

No one can ever realise without visiting the Mission how powerfully Mrs. Aitchison's influence has told upon the natives in the immediate district, in many motherly ways, as well as by her love of flowers, the determination to keep the house and all her personal surroundings pretty and bright.

The European residents in the district have for many years valued Mr. Aitchison's work in connection with the services held in Harding, where he has been instrumental in getting a church built by public subscription and also an excellent school for the Griqua children. He has done a good deal of work among the Griqua

GIRLS' HOME AND SCHOOL.

people, holding regular services among them, and I think I am right in saying that he has for many years acted, although unofficially, as chaplain of the Harding Goal.

I have been warned that if this long letter is to be read through it must not be too long, and much as I should like to tell more of my friends' love and work, I must conclude, and shall give in an appendix a list of the properties of the out stations and other information connected with the Mission.

The balance sheet will show for itself how much need there is for help. I cannot improve upon Mr. David Russell's words, which I quote again :—"Friends who desire to invest money in a work that bears in every part of it the impress of the Divine blessing, should open an account with the Rev. Samuel Aitchison."

Harding, Alfred County, Natal, is sufficient address.

GILBERT GILKES.

APPENDIX.

The Schools in connection with the Mission are as follows :—

Ikwezi Lamaci,	founded	1880.
Ihluku,	„	1888.
Harding (Griqua),	„	1889.
Weza,	„	1898.

There are about 180 on the roll and about 120 regular attenders. There are three English teachers, three Griquas, and one Zulu.

Other schools working until recently have now been closed owing to lack of funds, a Government grant not being given unless a certified teacher is employed.

Different Branches of the Mission.

Ikwezi Lamaci,	founded	1876.			
Harding,	,,	1887.	7	miles from	Ikwezi.
Ihluku,	,,	1888.	10	,,	,,
Elwateni,	,,	1890.	9	,,	,,
Mlotywa's,	,,	1893.	17	,,	,,
Mhlahlane,	,,	1893.	22	,,	,,
Weza,	,,	1898.	5	,,	,,
Mpikwa's,	,,	1888.	3	,,	,,
Bangeni,	,,	1893.	15	,,	,,
Ntaba's Preaching Place ...	,,	1898.	11	,,	,,

Names and Duties of the Evangelists and Helpers.

Mr. W. F. Hunter takes services on Sundays.

Mr. E. Guthrie teaches in the Native School at Ikwezi and takes meetings, and Mrs. Guthrie has charge of the Girls' Home.

The Griqua Evangelists are:—C. Roux, N. Blukes, and P. Ulbricht, who take services on Sundays and during the week.

Native Evangelists:—Joseph Sidoyi, Tom Somgwelo, Jonathan Somgwelo, Stephen Somgwelo, Paulos Mboto, David Jama, Umzukela, Upantyi, Balincwadi Mjojeli, Zechariah, all take services on Sundays and during the week. Samuel Balincwadi, teacher.

Buildings.

At Ikwezi, Mission House, brick with iron roof.

„ Girl's Home (cottage), brick with iron roof.

„ Church and School, brick building 40ft. by 20ft., with thatch roof.

„ Boy's Room, "wattle and daub," with iron roof.

„ Work-shop, stable, and outhouses.

At Harding, Church and School, brick building, iron roof.

At Ihluku, Church and School, wood building.

„ Teachers' quarters, „

At Elwateni, Church and School.

At Mlotywa's, Church. A hut at present, but hope soon to have the wood and iron building erected.

At Weza, Church and School.

At Mpikwa's, hut in which meetings are held.

At Bangeni, meetings held in a private house.

At Mhlahlane, meetings held in a hut at present.